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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Joint written statement* submitted by the American Civil Liberties Union, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) Asociación Civil, Conectas Direitos Humanos, Washington Office on Latin America, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, World Organisation Against Torture, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 June 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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New call from national and international rights groups on the need to ensure accountability for the U.S. CIA Torture Program[1]*

Last December, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released the summary, findings and conclusions of its four-year investigation into the Detention and Interrogation Program operated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Since then, the international human rights community has reiterated the call for full transparency about and accountability for this unlawful program, in which systematic human rights violations, including the crimes under international law of torture and enforced disappearance were committed. Last March, more than 20 human rights groups called on the Council to take action and demand that the United States fulfill its international human rights obligations on truth, accountability and remedy, including by appointing a special prosecutor to conduct a comprehensive and credible criminal investigation of alleged serious crimes described in the report and to establish a special fund to compensate victims.

Last month, during the United States' UPR session, a significant number of Member-States joined civil society's call and raised the issue of accountability and reparations for the use of torture and other human rights violations in the context of U.S. counter-terrorism policies and practices.

They also emphasized the need to end indefinite detention and close the Guantánamo detention facility, one of the remaining examples of the unlawful actions taken in the name of national security since the attacks of 11 September 2001. Delivering justice for the victims and ending indefinite detention in Guantánamo are both issues that still require more decisive and urgent action from the Obama administration.

On 26 June, the world will mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. The U.S. government was a strong supporter of the adoption of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT), which is commemorated every year on this day. The United States is also a generous contributor to the U.N. Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. But the U.S.'s failure to hold accountable those responsible for the CIA program of torture and enforced disappearance, to ensure the victims' rights to truth and reparations, and to take other actions to ensure non-repetition of these heinous crimes leaves the U.S. in violation of its own obligations under UNCAT and other international instruments and is a serious blow to the international human rights system, in general, and to the global effort to eradicate torture and enforced disappearance, in particular.

During its next session, the Council will adopt the Working Group report on the U.S. UPR. We call on the Council to send a strong message against impunity for torture and enforced disappearances and demand that the United States take measures to meet the full spectrum of its obligations under international law to ensure accountability, transparency, reparations and non-repetition, including declassification of the full Senate report on the CIA detention program, independent comprehensive criminal investigation, and the issuing of apologies and compensation to victims of enforced disappearance, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Continued impunity is a dark chapter in the history of the United States that threatens to undermine the universally-recognized prohibition against torture and other abusive treatment, and sends the dangerous message to U.S. and foreign officials that there will be no consequences for future abuses. Other governments implicated in the CIA torture program

[1] A shorter version of this statement, was delivered on 24 Jun 2015 in the 25th Meeting of the 29th Regular Session of Human Rights Council, General Debate Under Agenda Item 4 - Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

must also be held accountable and are obligated to conduct independent investigations, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide effective remedies to victims of torture, enforced disappearance and other human rights violations.

We know from the experiences of civil society groups and survivors of torture around the world that the struggle for accountability for human rights violations and the search for truth can be a long and difficult journey. Yet the United States has much to gain from rejecting impunity, returning to the rule of law, and providing adequate redress to the dozens and dozens of people it so brutally abused.

We hope the United States will follow that path.

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*Center for Constitutional Rights Inc. an NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.